
Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program 2007 Request for Proposals



State of California
CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION
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SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814-3396
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California Postsecondary Education Commission
Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program
2007 Request for Proposals

Announcement

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) announces the 2007 Request for Proposals to fund projects under the federal Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) State Grants Program. The purpose of the grant projects is to support the preparation, induction, and professional development of K-12 public and private school teachers and other school-based personnel in the core academic subjects: **Mathematics, Science, English, Reading or Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Civics and Government, Economics, Arts, History, and Geography**. Grants are awarded only to California Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) which partner with K-12 Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

The 2007 Request for Proposals (RFP) is a targeted initiative focused on early elementary education. It includes a specific requirement for evaluation research to be incorporated within the structure of the project. The ITQ State Grants Program initiative reflects the importance of the early elementary experience in education, especially to at-risk students, as well as a growing linkage with preschool initiatives that are gaining support in California. The initiative also emphasizes professional development that is based upon *and that contributes to* the knowledge of what actually works to raise student achievement. **The RFP is not an open solicitation.** Only one initiative is incorporated, and it is limited to serving teachers in kindergarten through grade two. Other initiatives will continue to be considered in future funding cycles as CPEC pursues a multi-faceted approach to implementing the federal Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program in California.

MANDATED REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY STATE GRANTS PROGRAM PROPOSALS (see p. 10 for a detailed description):

All projects:

1. MUST provide evidence that project activities are developed and implemented under a joint agreement between an institution of higher education's school of education, a department within the college of arts and sciences, and a Local Educational Agency (i.e., a K-12 school district). **The award is made to the institution of higher education.**
2. MUST draw from, and be based upon, scientifically based research.
3. MUST contain an evaluation research and dissemination plan for adding to the existing research base that provides a foundation for the proposed project.
4. MUST include a *high-need* Local Educational Agency (LEA), as defined by U.S. Census data, as a partner and MUST serve one or more high-need schools based on local criteria.
5. MUST submit to the Commission a *Letter of Intent to Submit a Proposal* form in order to receive and complete a full application package.

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IMPORTANT NOTE:

Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, each state and territory administers two programs: a formula grant program conducted by the K-12 state department of education, and a competitive grant program administered by a higher education entity. **In California, the California Department of Education (CDE) administers the formula grant portion of the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program, Title II, Part A.**

This document does **NOT** apply to the formula portion of the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program. For information regarding the Title II, Part A formula program, please contact Robert Lee, California Department of Education, at 916-323-5799 or rlee@cde.ca.gov.

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Background

The Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program—Title II, Part A of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001—is the most recent edition of a long-standing effort by the federal government to improve teaching and learning in America’s schools. Since 1985, the Commission has directed more than \$100 million in federal funds to improve the teaching workforce in California. Over 210 grants have been awarded by the Commission to a variety of educational entities, including K-12 school districts, institutions of higher education, informal science centers, and non-profit educational organizations. For many years, the program was known as the “Eisenhower Grant Program.” While it was initially targeted to mathematics and science instruction, the program has expanded to include all the core subject areas, and, under NCLB, has changed from its “Eisenhower” designation to “Improving Teacher Quality.”

The Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program provides federal funds to states for both formula and competitive grants to improve the academic content knowledge and pedagogical skills of teachers, principals, and other school-based personnel. NCLB focuses on increasing student achievement. Title II, Part A supports academic achievement by helping schools and districts improve teacher and principal quality and ensure that all teachers are highly qualified.

Under Title II, Part A of NCLB, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) conducts competitions to provide grants to institutions of higher education (IHEs) that are working in partnership with local educational agencies. There are three mandatory partners: a school of education within an IHE; a school of arts and sciences within an IHE; and a high-need Local Education Agency (LEA), generally a school district. The law also allows for additional partners, including non-profit organizations, business and industry, and community-based organizations so long as the three mandated partners are represented.

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Goals and Objectives

The professional development of the teaching force and school leadership is a necessary condition for improving student achievement in California's schools. In funding Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) projects, the Commission has three goals:

1. To enhance the professional development of teachers in California including, but not limited to, subject matter and pedagogical content mastery.
2. To increase levels of student achievement.
3. To select projects with a sound plan, including high quality, standards-based curriculum and instruction that helps teachers to engage all students.

While providing K-12 teachers, principals, and other school-based personnel with access to high quality, standards-based professional development activities, the Commission also encourages ITQ activities that include parents and other caregivers or guardians.

To achieve the purpose of the program, the following items should be considered in the design of the program and should be appropriately addressed within the proposal. Activities should:

- Have a lasting and positive impact on classroom practices and student performance, and be sufficiently sustained, intensive, and of high quality.
- Connect with challenging national and state content standards, and support the implementation of standards within the content area selected for the project.
- Be integrated with the systemic reform efforts of states, school districts, and individual schools.
- Reflect current research on diverse teaching and learning methods and styles.
- Include strong academic content and contemporary instructional strategies.
- Incorporate activities and effective strategies for serving teachers and students from groups identified as historically underserved and underrepresented in particular subject areas, such as science and mathematics.
- Incorporate activities to address needs of English Learners and learners of Standard English.
- Incorporate multi-cultural and multi-language awareness training.
- Incorporate strategies for special needs students.
- Incorporate strategies that successfully raise expectations among teachers and administrators about what students can accomplish academically.
- Take into account that effective teaching and learning takes place in both formal and informal settings.
- Value and demonstrate the essential role of teachers in planning and implementing the professional development activity.

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RFP Initiative: Early Elementary Education—Grades K-2

California's content area standards and frameworks form the foundation of the state's educational reform system. Implementing standards and helping children to achieve those standards is an important purpose for professional development activities at all grade levels. The overall goal of the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program is to increase the content knowledge and pedagogical skill of teachers. For the 2007 grant competition, the program will focus only on teachers in early elementary education—kindergarten through grade two.

The publication of a new preschool document in 2007 presents a unique opportunity for the state. When the current draft of the *Preschool Learning Foundations*¹ is finalized and published, California will have a fundamental tool both to guide preschool teachers and to better enable primary school teachers to articulate classroom content. This ability to connect preschool learning with primary grade learning, and to create effective, smooth transitions between students' early school experiences, comes at an especially propitious time. In 2005, Secretary O'Connell announced California's commitment to creating high quality preschool education for all its children as a central strategy for closing the achievement gap.² Much work has already been done to fulfill this commitment (e.g., the establishment of the California Preschool Instructional Networks (CPIN), the drafting of the *Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations*, the contributions of First 5 California, and more). The publication of the *Preschool Learning Foundations* provides a pathway for connecting that work to the primary schools that will be receiving young students from preschool programs.

In order to make the best use of this pathway, primary grade teachers will need to know the new pre-kindergarten foundations, have a deep understanding of their own primary grade content standards, and have the analytical tools and understanding to make the requisite connections. In order to facilitate this process, the Commission seeks proposals designed to ensure that primary grade teachers have the breadth and depth of content knowledge envisioned by California's Standards for the Teaching Profession:³

1. Demonstrating knowledge of subject matter content and student development.
2. Organizing curriculum to support student understanding of subject matter.

¹ A draft of the first four domains of *Preschool Learning Foundations* is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp>.

² "Preschool for All: A First-Class Learning Initiative," California Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/se/yr05preschoolwp.asp

³ *California Standards for the Teaching Profession*, 1997, The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/reports/cstpreport.pdf>

3. Interrelating ideas and information within and across subject matter areas.
4. Developing student understanding through instructional strategies that are appropriate to the subject matter.
5. Using materials, resources, and technologies to make subject matter accessible to students.

In helping K-2 teachers to meet standards, the Commission intends not only to affect early elementary education but also, over the long term, the achievement gap. That gap, which has been highlighted by the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, is also the major priority of Superintendent O'Connell's 2007 educational agenda. Research shows that addressing the achievement gap must begin in the earliest grades, and that effective teachers are critical to increasing equity and access by helping all children, regardless of circumstance, achieve state standards.

In short, the goal of the Primary Grades Initiative is to enhance the professional development of California's K-2 teachers by building their subject matter and pedagogical content mastery, particularly to address the unique needs of primary grade students. To meet this goal, proposals under this initiative must meet the following requirements:

1. Proposers must work with teachers across the entire K-2 grade band within whole schools or districts, and are encouraged to include principals in school or district teams. While the number of teachers and administrators is open (in the past the Commission has funded projects serving as few as a dozen and as many as several thousand), proposers must demonstrate that their plans are cost effective. Proposers may choose to work within a single content area, multiple content areas, or all content areas.
2. Projects must provide a clear discussion of the nature of the professional development model and professional development activities that will be employed. The Commission helps provide teachers and other educational professionals with the best professional development activities available. Therefore, successful proposals should focus clearly on the nature and effectiveness of the intervention provided. CDE's publication *Elementary Makes the Grade!*⁴ presents evidence that analyzing student work and performance and/or mentoring and coaching are successful professional development strategies for teachers in this grade band. The Commission is also interested in identifying and validating promising new professional development models and activities. Proposers must be clear about the nature of the model they choose to use (its theory of action), the activities used, how that model meets the particular needs of the teachers it is designed to serve, and how the project's research component will attempt to validate the model. [A *special note*: The Commission will give special consideration to funding "academy" models. In these, prospective and current teachers spend time on their own professional development during part of the day, and then apply the knowledge gained by working with students in a classroom setting for the remainder of the day. Project activities that directly support the K-2 students involved should not constitute more than ten (10) percent of the total budget requested.]

⁴ *Elementary Makes the Grade!*, California Department of Education (CDE), 2000.

3. Proposals must make a compelling case that the proposed intervention meets the needs of the specific teachers and students who will be served. The intervention must be justified on two grounds: (1) performance deficit—proposers must provide educational data to demonstrate that the student population targeted has specific educational deficits in the proposed content area(s); and (2) treatment deficit—proposers must provide evidence that the treatment being proposed has a good chance of remedying the performance deficit. This may be done by citing relevant published research studies, by providing local pilot data, or by conducting a local needs assessment. Grounding the intervention in research showing that it meets a specific need is a key requirement of the RFP. In addition, proposers must demonstrate that the intervention claimed as *needed* is also *wanted* by the targeted teacher population (market demand).
4. It is the intent of NCLB and the Commission to view their awards as part of a shift to “knowledge-based” educational practice. Item 3 above requires that proposals develop *from* a research base. Item 4 requires that proposals *add to* that base. Successful proposals will contain a detailed evaluation research plan for studying their intervention and disseminating their results. Plans must employ controlled experiments focused on improvements in student achievement and should be clear about research questions being addressed, experimental models applied, instrumentation and data, and techniques of analysis. Although project interventions will typically be funded for three years, the research component will be funded for an additional year so as to allow collection and analysis of data reflecting the final year of the intervention. Additionally, while interventions will be focused on K-2 teachers, researchers should expect to collect and analyze student achievement data from third grade students in order to assess the project’s longer term effects.
5. The Commission is mindful that the primary grades present many unique challenges and opportunities. The main focus of proposals must be the professional development of California’s K-2 teachers toward subject matter and pedagogical content mastery. However, proposals may also include components addressing additional, related objectives where a compelling case can be made that these components act to strengthen the major goal of the proposal. Component topics may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. *Articulation with Preschool Learning Foundations:* The development of foundations (standards) for pre-school students and teachers creates a new set of formal partners for primary grade teachers. These teachers will soon have the opportunity to “double anchor” their practice with the standards that not only follow, but precede, their grade level. The Commission acknowledges the opportunity to formalize the academic linkages between preschool and the primary grades.
 - b. *English Language Arts (ELA) and English Language Development (ELD) Challenges:* The federal Reading First program and professional development programs in California such as AB 466 (now SB 472) have been designed to help teachers in grades K-2 become more effective and efficient teachers of literacy—the nuts and bolts of reading and language instruction. The challenge, however, is how such instruction can link to and support content learning in all areas. The persistent finding in research of a fourth grade slump suggests that as students reach the point

where they need to shift from a focus on *learning to read* to a focus on *reading to learn*, many fail to make the transition. Therefore, the Commission acknowledges that substantial work needs to be done to refit content area instruction back into the primary grade classroom.

- c. *Parent Education:* Many organizations (including CDE, the California State PTA, and the International Reading Association) have identified and highlighted the important role that parents play as their child's first teachers and ongoing advocates. The challenge that primary schools face rests with how they provide parents with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective in these roles. The Commission acknowledges an important opportunity for potential awardees to develop effective programs that: (1) empower parents through skill development; (2) enable schools to partner more effectively with parents and increase teachers' understanding of home culture; and (3) enhance student learning through increased cooperation between school and home.
- d. *Principals:* Elementary school principals act as their school's chief academic officer—a critical role that includes aspects of mentor, resource teacher, staff professional developer, director of student assessment, and more. The Commission acknowledges the opportunity to support this role by addressing the professional development of elementary school principals and district administrators, enabling them to better support the academic development of their primary grade classroom teachers at the K-2 level.
- e. *Special Education:* The Commission recognizes the challenges brought to early primary classrooms by the inclusion of students with special needs. It is often the regular classroom teacher at this level who initially identifies children with developmental delays and/or disabilities. Regular classroom teachers must understand the unique needs and learning styles of these students, have a profound understanding of the content standards for their level, and know how to modify and integrate the instruction of both groups in a smooth and consistent fashion. The Commission acknowledges the opportunity for proposers to infuse their standards-based content programs with information and techniques for teachers of mainstreamed students with special needs.

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Mandated Requirements for Proposals

TO BE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR AND RECEIVE AN IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY STATE GRANT, ALL PROJECTS:

1. MUST provide evidence that project activities are developed and implemented under a joint agreement that includes, at a minimum, an institution of higher education school or department of education, a school or department within the college of arts and sciences, and a high-need Local Educational Agency (i.e., a K-12 school district). At the time the final application is submitted, signatures must be included from appropriate personnel within the school of education, a department of arts and sciences, and the Local Educational Agency (LEA). A partnership *may* also include other local educational agencies, public charter schools, non-profit educational organizations, colleges and/or universities, non-profit cultural organizations, entities carrying out a pre-kindergarten program, or businesses. **The award, however, is made to the institution of higher education.**
2. MUST draw from scientifically based research. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act defines the term “scientifically based” as strategies that have been proven, through controlled experiments focused on improvements in student achievement, to work in schools. Successful proposers must be able to demonstrate that their specific proposed intervention plan is supported by specific research results.
3. MUST contain an evaluation research and dissemination plan for adding to the existing research base that provides a foundation for the proposed project. The plan should make explicit the evaluation research questions being addressed, experimental models applied, instrumentation and data, techniques of analysis, and strategies for disseminating results. Successful proposers must be able to demonstrate that their specific proposed evaluation research plan is conceptually clear, integrated with their intervention plan, and technically feasible.
4. MUST include a *high-need* Local Educational Agency (LEA) as a partner and MUST serve one or more high-need schools. A *high-need LEA* is one that serves at least 10,000 children from families with incomes below the poverty line OR one in which 20 percent of the children are from families below the poverty line, *based on U.S. Census data*, AND one in which a high percentage of teachers are teaching subjects outside of their certification level OR in which there is a high percentage of teachers with emergency, provisional, or temporary credentials. (A list of California high-need school districts may be found at www.cpec.ca.gov/federalprograms/RFP.asp). High-need *schools* may be identified by common local indicators such as the percent of students who qualify for free and reduced lunches.

5. MUST submit to the Commission a *Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal*. This form must contain the signature of a representative from each of the mandatory Institution of Higher Education (IHE) partners and from a high-need Local Education Agency. Only those partnerships that submit a *Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal* and receive notification of acceptance from the Commission will receive an official Request for Proposal Application.

Copies of the *Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal* may be found at www.cpec.ca.gov/federalprograms/RFP.asp. The form may be downloaded and filled out in Microsoft Word. It must be signed and submitted by 4 p.m. on Friday, May 25, 2007. The form may be faxed to meet the deadline, but a copy with original signatures must be received by mail at the Commission office no later than Tuesday, May 29. Contact the Commission at (916) 322-7984 for further information.

Additional information on the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program and access to online copies of this Request for Proposals are available at the CPEC Web site at www.cpec.ca.gov/federalprograms/RFP.asp.

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Application Process and Timeline

THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE 2007 GRANTS

In the 2007 competition, the Commission anticipates awarding between eight and sixteen grants ranging from \$200,000 to a maximum award of \$1.0 million over the life of the project. The grant period will be four years: three years for professional development implementation, and a fourth year to complete the evaluation research on the outcomes of the intervention. Proposers should anticipate budgeting eight to 15% of the entire grant request for the evaluation research component. Because of the highly competitive nature of the RFP process, applicants are encouraged to plan for the lowest budget that will enable them to accomplish their goals, and will be required to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of their proposals. Matching funds and in-kind donations are not required, but will receive special consideration if included.

As previously noted, this is a targeted initiative open only to proposals which respond to the specific parameters outlined on pp. 6-9. This document explains the types of projects to be supported and the conditions under which grants for these projects will be awarded.

Only those applicants who submit the *Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal* by the deadline below will receive an official Request for Proposal Application and be able to proceed to submit a proposal. A fillable form for this notice is available for downloading at www.cpec.ca.gov/federalprograms/RFP.asp.

The application will include, but is not limited to, the following items:

- Application cover sheet, including signature sheets for all partners, an abstract page on which the project information must be summarized, and a statement of assurances regarding compliance with federal law and program requirements.
- Narrative requirements that will include:
 - Project overview/summary, including clear statement of outcomes to be achieved.
 - Need for the project.
 - Project goals and objectives.
 - Project action plan, including theory of action of the professional development intervention that is proposed.
 - Evaluation research plan, including description of how the results will be disseminated.
 - Identification of key project personnel.
 - Summary and detailed budget for all years of the project, including narrative explanations of major expenditures.
 - Other documentation as necessary.

The final application package outlines detailed information required in the formal proposal, and includes statements of assurances required of all proposers. The package also describes the process and criteria for evaluating proposals and selecting 2007 grant awardees.

DETAILED TIMELINE

Friday, May 25, 2007, by 4:00 p.m. **Deadline for Submission of Notice of Intent**

Deadline for the submission of the *Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal* to the California Postsecondary Education Commission, 770 L Street, Suite 1160, Sacramento, CA 95814: *Notices of Intent to Submit a Proposal must be submitted no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 25, 2007. The form may be faxed to meet the deadline; however, a mailed copy with original signatures must be received in the Commission offices no later than May 29th. E-mail submissions are not accepted.* A copy of the Notice of Intent form may be downloaded at www.cpec.ca.gov/federalprograms/RFP.asp

[NOTE: The following deadlines are applicable only to those institutions that submit a Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal and receive an official Request for Proposal Application package from the Commission.]

Tuesday, July 3, 2007 by 4:00 p.m. **Deadline for Submission of Proposal Application**

Official Request for Proposal Application packages will be provided to those institutions that meet the requirements to submit a *Notice of Intent to Submit a Proposal*. *Completed applications are due at the California Postsecondary Education Commission office by 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 3, 2007. NOTE: Submission requirements are outlined in the application package; all submissions must include original copies with signatures.*

August 20-31, 2007 (approximate) **Interviews**

Mandatory interviews will be conducted with applicants who, after the initial review, are recommended for further consideration to be funded. Those unable to provide a project team to attend will not be considered further in the grant review process. The Commission anticipates holding interviews in both northern and southern California. Scheduling of specific dates and times will be arranged in advance with those institutions invited to the interviews.

Late September or early October, 2007 **Award Notification**

Notification of awards will be made as soon as possible after interviews are concluded.

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Technical Assistance Workshops

The Commission will hold workshops in early May 2007 to answer questions regarding the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program funding criteria and to discuss in greater detail the proposal solicitation and grant selection processes. *Attendance at a workshop is optional, but is encouraged.* Institutions considering proposing are urged to bring teams that include both IHE and LEA representatives.

Workshops are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Alameda County Office of Education

313 W. Winton Ave.

Hayward, CA 94544

(510) 887-0152

Wednesday, May 9, 2007

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Fresno City College (Staff Dining Room)

1101 E. University Avenue

Fresno, CA 93741

(559) 442-4600

Thursday, May 10, 2007

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Coastline Community College Center, Garden Grove

12901 Euclid Street

Garden Grove, CA 92840

(714) 546-7600

Advance registration is requested—although not required—for attendance, as the Commission would like to plan for the number of persons who will attend at each location. Please notify us of your attendance by 12:00 noon on Friday, May 4, 2007 by completing the online registration form at www.cpec.ca.gov/federalprograms/RFP.asp.

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Program Administration

The Commission, in consultation with a state-level advisory committee, administers the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program in California.

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